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THE SITUATION

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF

THE NATIONAL CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM LEAGUE,

AUGUST 4, 1886,

BY

HON. GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

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FROM
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PRESS OF
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THE SITUATION.

THE earliest historic legend of the State in which we are assembled is that of the Indian greeting to Roger Williams. As he coasted along the western shore of the Seekonk river at the head of the bay, he heard suddenly a greeting in his native tongue. "What cheer? Netop, what cheer?" It was the voice of friendly Indians welcoming him to the State that he founded, and which, remembering his courage and his faith, has wisely chosen for its emblem the anchor, and for its legend, the words, "in God we hope." If now mindful of the cause which brings us to the shores of Narragansett bay, we should ask each other of Civil-Service Reform, what cheer brothers, what cheer? I, for one, should answer promptly, better and better cheer; such cheer, indeed, as no association like ours ever enjoyed at its sixth annual meeting; never were the skies so bright, never was the future so fair.

I am fully aware of the other view which is vociferously urged. I read every day in some newspaper that Civil-Service Reform is now at last finally dead. But I have heard it so often and have been so constantly bidden to the obsequies, that I am very skeptical of its actual decease. It is now twenty years since that worthy son of Rhode Island, Thomas Allen Jenckes, opened

in Congress the great debate for reform, and at least half a dozen times since that happy day I have heard that reform was as dead as the alien and sedition laws of the United States bank. When Congress refused the appropriation to President Grant I was sympathetically assured that the pretty bubble had burst. When President Hayes felt that his views were those of a small minority, but an exceedingly awkward squad for the party managers, and his action accordingly was very cautious, it was announced again that the humbug was exploded. When the House of Representatives in 1882 for half an hour merrily kicked and cuffed reform and cut down the appropriation which President Arthur had asked, it was evident to many delighted observers that Sunday-school politics were "played out." When a large body of Civil Service Reformers supported Mr. Cleveland for the presidency, it was angrily alleged that reform was betrayed and murdered in the house of its false friends. When inexplicable appointments, and arbitrary removals, and an apparent want of consistent adherence to principle have been pointed out under the present administration, the situation has been described as a wild saturnalia of spoils around the corpse of reform. Indeed one thing of which in many willing minds there has been no doubt ever since the reform was born, is that reform is dead. If it were so, it would certainly prove that death loves a shining mark, and he is supposed to be a sure marksman. But this time he has missed.

Public opinion upon this subject was never so aroused, so enlightened, and so determined. The wholesome purpose and sound reason of reform were never so generally and so clearly perceived, and it was never so plainly a pressing public question.

There was never such a rattling of amazement and consternation among the dry bones of Bourbon party politics; never such a hysterical protestation upon the part of peddlers of patronage that the deluge would not be much of a shower after all; never such shuddering certainty in the minds of political money changers, that the people will presently scourge them with wrath out of the temple of liberty. Political assessments, the blackmail imposed by party freebooters upon the employés of the people, have been in great part suppressed, and have been permanently stigmatized as despicable. Arbitrary removals which were the accepted and unquestioned practice of the public service, have not ceased, indeed, but they are now instantly challenged and exposed, and there is a distinct public sense of wrong in the act and a disposition to deal rigorously with any administration which is guilty of the offence. The recent debates in Congress upon the subject of reform, the eloquent silence of many leaders, no less than the hostile speech of others; the eagerness on one side to prove falsity to reform against the other, and the recrimination that the pot when in power had been as black as it now alleged the administration kettle to be; the acrimony, the sullenness, the avoidance of the vote on one side; the banter, the accusation, and the sarcasm on the other, all showed in that assembly, which talks always with its ear turned toward the people, a universal consciousness that it was dealing with a question in which the country was profoundly interested, and which would exert a powerful influence upon the election.

It was quite right. The pricked bubble, the exploded humbug, the played out Sunday school game, the aristocratic device, the monarchical plot, the trick to retain Republicans in office, the

un-American reform, slain and thrice slain, and dead as the Bank or the Embargo, will be for the first time a leading question in the Congressional elections of this year. On one side support of the administration will mean support of reform; on the other, opposition to the administration will mean denunciation of its infidelity to reform. The democratic candidate this year need not protest the soundness of his views upon State sovereignty and a revision of the tariff, nor solemnly affirm his Jeffersonian principles, but he must announce his approval or disapproval of the President's course and so define distinctly his position upon reform. The Republican need not dilate upon protection and a gold standard, a free ballot and a fair count; but while he is faithful to Republican traditions he must declare unequivocally for appointments by proved merit, and in an open and free competition. Let the Democratic candidate who holds with Senator Vance that reform is unconstitutional and un-Democratic, and consequently that the President betrays his trust in tolerating Republicans in the Civil Service, say so frankly and appeal for judgment. Let the Republican candidate who holds with Senator Ingalls that the Civil Service is spoils, that the spoils belong to the victors, and that Republicans ought to scorn to serve the country under a Democratic administration, say with equal frankness that the President betrays his party trust if he does not turn out Republicans. If the nominating conventions should omit to secure such an expression from candidates for Congress the National Reform League will undertake to supply the omission. At last, said Wendell Phillips in 1860, after thirty years of anti-slavery agitation,—at last the slave has elected a President of the United States. In 1882 at the annual meeting of this League

it resolved that for the first time candidates for Congress should be asked to express their views upon reform; and now after a short but vigorous agitation of four years it is evident that under the necessary conditions of the election of this autumn Civil-Service reform will be a distinct issue in the election of the Congress of the United States.

It is by such facts and such a situation that the progress of reform is to be estimated. Inconsistencies and failures in the practical enforcement of the principle may be deplored, but the advance of reform itself is now beyond the control of any administration. This year or another year may be a bad year for fruit, but none the less the fruit trees are rooted fast in a kindly soil, and abundant and noble fruit is sure. The important question is not whether this or that executive officer respects the law, but whether the public mind is interested and aroused. The prosperity of reform lies in the condition of public opinion. Every good reform is a public conviction before it is a law, and the first demonstration of active and serious opposition is the unfailing sign that, in the language of religious revivals, the public mind is under conviction. In my first address before the League, four years ago, I said that the battle with the spoils system had begun in earnest. In its nature it must be an obstinate and strenuous contest. We are in the midst of it now. The very vigor of the fight shows the strength both of the reform sentiment and of the spoils tradition. We have never anticipated, I am sure, an undisputed victory. We have never supposed that we should march as on parade, with the bands playing gaily, straight across the field of battle. We know too well the power of the evil entrenched in tradition and prejudice and ignorance and fierce

party spirit to expect that the acts of any officer or the course of any administration which was not especially elected upon the reform issue and for the purpose of reform, however friendly to reform they might be, would be perfectly consistent and reasonable and free from reproach. In estimating the situation we do not accept on the one hand without qualification praise of its own administration from a party which, as a party, has shown little sympathy with the distinctive policy of the executive, nor on the other hand can we heed denunciation of the reform course of the administration proceeding from the opposition party, stimulated by party spirit for a party purpose, and not intended to promote reform.

This League is the only organized and authentic national representative of the reform sentiment. I challenge any man to show that it has in any degree or at any time betrayed the trust voluntarily assumed by it, with the approval of the locally organized friends of reform, of honestly and adequately representing that sentiment, and its criticisms and demands upon political parties and public men. The League has pandered to no personal ambition, to no party purpose. It has been no man's instrument nor has it been the organ of any faction. Upon the late party change of administration, on behalf of the friends of reform and in the public interest the League addressed the newly-elected President earnestly commending to him the interests of reform, and in a forcible, unequivocal and patriotic strain he responded, expressing the sympathy with the movement which he had practically proved as Governor of New York, pledging himself to the enforcement of the reform law in good faith, and to an observance of its spirit in selections for appointment beyond

its range. A year and five months of his administration have now passed, and the time has arrived when a general survey of its action upon this subject and of the condition of reform under his administration is practicable and desirable. The Executive Committee of the League, therefore, recently appointed a Committee of which I have the honor to be Chairman, charged with the duty of reporting, first, concerning the enforcement and operation of the National Civil-Service law : second, concerning the principles and methods followed by the administration in making appointments, removals, and suspensions : and third, concerning the progress of the reformed system in state and municipal governments. The report of the committee will naturally embrace some of the topics to which I should otherwise allude in this address. But I shall leave to that report of eminent representatives of the cause from various parts of the country to state authoritatively the judgment of the League upon the general course of the administration as affecting Civil-Service Reform.

Apart from the details of the enforcement of the law and of executive action in regard to appointments and removals, there are three chief points of interest in the reform history of the year. First, the effort in Congress to annul the national law ; second, the effort to destroy the efficiency of the State law in Massachusetts : and third, the introduction of the reform bill of Mr. Edmunds. The direct assault to repeal the national law failed in both houses of Congress. But the efforts at direct repeal were only rockets thrown up from a sinking ship. They served merely to cast a momentary light upon despair. The serious attack was of another kind. It was a proposition to make the payment of the salary of the Civil-Service Commissioners contingent upon a

change of rules by the President which would abolish competition and facilitate partisan appointment. It was an ingenious scheme to rebuke the President, to discredit the Civil-Service Commission, and to nullify the reform law. The fact that it was an attack by indirection, sure if it did not prosper to be disposed of by a point of order and without a record of the vote, showed that the leaders doubted its success. But they were willing to try the assault in order to prove their own hostility to the President and to show to their constituents that they were guiltless of reform and would gladly distribute spoils if only they could. In this last purpose the effect succeeded, but not in rebuking the President nor in discrediting the Commission.

It is unfortunate that the cunning method of the attack prevented a vote. But even had there been a unanimous adverse vote it would have shown not that the House is an assembly of reformers, but only that representatives are aware of the quality and extent of the reform sentiment in the country. How little the undoubted desire of a great and intelligent public sentiment practically and permanently to establish the reformed system really animates Congress is shown by the little tricks that the House tolerated in the appropriation bill to evade the reform law. On the 17th of June, on the motion of Mr. Randall, the House of Representatives reduced the number of clerks within the classified service in the Patent Office by thirty, and increased the number of skilled laborers at \$840 a year from sixty-two to ninety-two. The object was evident. Examinations are not held for clerkships of less than an annual value of \$900. The so-called skilled laborers of the Patent Office, though employed chiefly on clerical work, have not been treated as within the

classified service, although probably they fall within it. The amendment was passed by the House without a division, and was accepted by the Senate. Congress thus snatched a few small places out of the classified service and threw them upon the heap of spoils. The plea is that a few thousands of dollars are saved. The result is that the public service loses trained capacity, the law is evaded, the public offices are demoralized, and Congress is disgraced by a petty trick.

Such a trick would be impossible were there a sincere desire in Congress to secure reform. But there was no positive reform legislation during the session, and nothing in the action of either House showed any serious interest in the subject. Senator Hampton's bill making it a misdemeanor for a Senator or Representative to recommend or solicit appointments; Mr. Willis' to repeal the four years' law; Mr. Long's to repeal the tenure of office act; Mr. Cutcheon's for a bureau of Civil-Service appointments; Mr. Bayne's for the election of certain officers by the people; Mr. Cox's for an equitable classification and compensation of certain officers, were the other more prominent propositions affecting the Civil Service which were introduced. Some sleep in committee, some were reported, none have become laws. Whatever may be the assertion of party managers, nothing shows so conclusively that reform is in no proper sense the policy of either of the great parties as the course of Congress. No leader in either House is an aggressive Civil-Service Reformer. No Senator or Representative has proposed to extend the scope of the reform law. Congress, indeed, is plainly conscious of the public interest, and of the rapidly increasing pressure of the question. But it is both angry and bewildered. The shepherds

are in the fog and hate to try the upward path, and the sheep can only bleat plaintively for the lost pastures of patronage.

But while the negative conduct of Congress signally illustrates the indifference of party politicians, the action of one of the chief bureaus of administration in the Treasury Department happily illustrates the results of sincere, intelligent, and courageous fidelity to reform. The bureau of printing and engraving controls more patronage of places not included in the classified service than all the other Treasury bureaus combined. It has been notorious as the refuge of parasites of the most unscrupulous spoilsmen, and an investigating committee of experts in the Treasury of the same party with the chief part of the force employed in the bureau, reported a few years ago that the vicious circle of lavish appropriation and of appointment by political influence had led to the employment of a force which in some divisions was twice and in others three times as large as was necessary, and that more than half the force in the bureau might be dispensed with. Soon after his inauguration President Cleveland appointed the chairman of this committee to be chief of the bureau. During the first thirteen months of his control, ending on the first of July, there have been but seven permanent original appointments, all of which were to places that it was absolutely necessary to fill. Three persons also have been appointed in the place of relatives who had broken down in the service, and fifteen of the most deserving of the employés who had been discharged in order to reduce the force have been recalled to the service as they were needed. No person has been discharged for political reasons, or to make place for another. Since the first of March, 1885, the force of the bureau has been reduced by three

hundred persons. Of the appropriations made for its support for the fiscal year 1885 \$73,000 were returned to the Treasury unused, and there will be an estimated saving of at least \$175,000 in the appropriation for 1886, making an aggregate saving of about \$250,000 in this single branch of the Department under this administration, and all that has been done has received the most cordial support of Mr. Manning, the Secretary of the Treasury. This is Civil-Service Reform. This bureau is what every bureau in the public service might become with incalculable advantage to the country, to political morality, and to the true function of party in a republic, which is not to distribute patronage but to determine policy. But such a beneficent and remarkable administration of an office is impossible except upon the condition that happily exists in this bureau. There must be at the head of the office the same thorough belief in reform, the same ability and intelligence and courage to enforce it which distinguish the head of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, one of the earliest and most efficient friends of reform in the country, Mr. Edward O. Graves.

I can only mention the second point, the persistent and significant effort of the Massachusetts Legislature, by an overwhelming majority, practically to repeal the reform law of that State — an effort which was eloquently and indignantly opposed by every veteran who took part in the debate, except the author of the bill, and which was happily baffled by the forcible and conclusive veto of Governor Robinson. The frank and earnest opposition of the veterans proved that it is a gross dishonor to the men who offered their lives in defense of a Union founded upon equal rights and equal laws to assert that not content with

the consciousness of duty well done, and with the national gratitude manifested in pensions, in homes and hospitals, and in friendly preference wherever preference is justifiable, they demand the repeal of equal laws carefully designed to promote the general welfare and universally acknowledged to be effective to that end. It was the veterans in the Massachusetts Legislature who opposed the repeal of the reform law, not the politicians who pressed it, who truly represented the spirit which inspired the soldier and sailor of the Union from Fort Sumter to Appomattox, from Dupont and Ward to Farragut and Porter.

The third chief incident in the annals of reform for the year is the bill recently introduced in the Senate by Senator Edmunds. It is a bill of great importance, into the general discussion of which I cannot now enter. But two of its provisions demand our most careful attention, for while this League seeks the repeal of the four years' law, the Edmunds bill proposes to re-enact it; and while the League would leave the power of removal to the appointing officer and destroy the motives for its unjust exercise, the Edmunds bill would confer that power upon the United States Judges. The passage of this bill would confirm and perpetuate one of the most mischievous abuses in the government. Miss Salmon, in her *History of the Appointing Power of the President*, is not extravagant in saying of the four years' law, "Never in the whole history of the legislation of a hundred years affecting the appointing power has so disastrous a measure been enacted." It practically places the whole body of important subordinate offices, upon which depends the vast ramification of minor employments, at the disposal of the President during his term. It enables him to change the entire force of the Civil Service

without the odium of arbitrary removal. It was, indeed, the four years' law that introduced the practice of such removals and began the sophistication and corruption of public sentiment which are revealed in the familiar assertion that a clean partisan sweep of the public service is the intentional and logical result of an election. The truth is otherwise. Mr. Randall, the biographer of Jefferson and as strong an anti-Federalist, admits that even after Jefferson's election minor offices were understood to be held upon the constitutional tenure of good conduct, and Mr. Calhoun, in 1835, states that arbitrary removals were of recent date, that is since 1820 when the four years' law was passed. Mr. Benton said truly that the expiration of the term was regarded as the creation of a vacancy to be filled by a new appointment, and in 1826, six years after the passage of the law, the select committee of the Senate recommended its repeal because the law operated against its own intent and served to turn out faithful officers instead of retaining them.

The forecast of Jefferson and Madison in regard to the mischievous results of the four years' law have been amply verified by experience. It has been one of the great bulwarks of the spoils system and has been vigorously defended by every party buccaneer. Even when there has been no party change of administration the vacation of the offices by the expiration of the term has opened the opportunity for gratifying factional feeling. In 1882 I pointed out that of 825 officers whose terms had expired in nine months of the late administration nearly half had been dropped from the service. If 825 offices, nearly one-quarter of the 3,400 or 3,500 subject to executive nomination, and filled by members of his own party, had not been vacated by law

within the space of nine months is it probable that the President would have vacated them within that time either by his own act or by an appeal to a Judge? Is it conceivable that of those 825 officers nearly one-half were unfit for their positions? Is it doubtful that the most desperate and unscrupulous of partisans in every political contest are officers who know that the chance of their own support and that of their families depends upon the result of an election. Manly independence and self-respect must be necessarily destroyed and the public service consequently demoralized by the knowledge that honesty and ability and experience and industry and efficiency will be of no avail to retain men in their employments if a party administration or the factional control of their own party should change at the end of four years. A limited term for the minor appointive offices is a direct incitement to intrigue and fraud and falsehood. It is a folly unknown in private business, and it deprives public employment of that incentive to diligence and efficiency, and destroys that mainspring of honorable self respect, the peaceful consciousness that success depends upon merit and not on favor, and that fidelity and competency are the guarantee of continued employment and promotion. After the discussions of recent years the deliberate re-enactment by Congress of the four years' law would plainly contemplate and sanction a clean sweep of the service with every party change of administration as fast as official terms should expire. The President would be invited by the law itself to reward his own partisans as every day placed offices at his disposal. The Civil Service would become, with the express approval of Congress, a mere treasury of party spoils.

The Edmunds bill is in fact a bill to enact and legitimate all

the evils of a clean sweep. Would they be obviated by the extraordinary provision of judicial suspension and removal, which is another proposition of the bill? I think not. This provision would at most prevent only the arbitrary dismissal of incumbents during their terms. But it would not affect the essential evil of a four years' law, which is automatic removal, removal by the expiry of the term. If dismissal without reason during a brief term is wrong, dismissal without reason at the end of such a term cannot be justified upon any sound business principle. Reform, as we understand it, seeks to take the whole non-political public service out of politics. But the Edmunds bill thrusts it into politics. There is nothing in the provision for judicial suspension or removal during the term which would restrain the mischief in the least degree. The service would be necessarily partisan, and a partisan service would be what it has always been, the most despotic, unscrupulous, and debasing of party machines. It is true that the present reform law leaves the executive choice beyond the classified service entirely untrammelled. But the spirit of the law forbids the abuse both of the power of removal and of appointment throughout the unclassified service, while its warmest friends seek to strengthen the reform of which it is an active agent by the repeal of the four years' law. In the situation which the Edmunds bill would invite the only restraint upon the complete prostitution of patronage to party would be the chance of a reform President. But this would be but a momentary relief, and the chance of a reform President would certainly not be increased by the unrestricted power of filling the whole public service with active personal partisans. When Madame de Stael said to the Emperor Alexander that a despotism may be bene-

ficient, he answered Yes, Madame, but it would be only a happy accident. The reform of the Civil Service must not be left to a happy accident.

But while the method of removal which the bill provides would not remedy the immense evil which the bill promotes, what would be the effect upon the discipline and efficiency of the service itself? The bill provides for removal for cause to be determined by judicial authority. But such a law would logically and inevitably affect the whole service. If the President could remove a postmaster only for cause satisfactory to a court of law, it would be manifestly unjust to permit the postmaster to remove a clerk without cause determined with similar care. The result would be intolerable. The right of counsel and the forms of law would be invoked, the whole legal machinery of mandamuses, injunctions, certioraris, and the rules of evidence would be put in play to displace a slovenly postmaster, or on the other hand to keep an incompetent clerk at his desk or a sleepy watchman on his beat. Cause for the removal of a small collector, or a letter carrier in the post office, or an accountant in the Custom House would be presented with all the pomp of impeachment, and established like a high crime and misdemeanor. The discipline of the service upon which its efficiency depends would be ruined. If appointing officers, from the President to the head of a bureau, were obliged to prove negligence, or insolence, or want of quickness, or any of the myriad forms of inefficiency in a subordinate as he would prove a charge of theft or arson, the officer's good nature would recoil, and there would be no removals except for offenses of which the penal law takes cognizance. The superior officers would endure much and long rather than bring a suit

against a subordinate for unpunctuality or laziness; official discipline would disappear, and the efficiency of the service would be fatally impaired. Moreover, when removal should depend upon the judgment of a court, removal would be always and justly regarded as a stigma upon character. Removal for cause, therefore, if the cause were to be decided by any authority but that of the superior officer, instead of improving would swiftly and enormously enhance the cost by ruining the efficiency of the public service, by destroying subordination and making every lazy and worthless officer or clerk twice as careless and incompetent as before.

I do not indeed forget the wanton outrages of removal in the public service, nor the unhappiness and despair which they produce. Undoubtedly the larger part of the personal suffering and injustice arising from the vicious system of treating the public service as party spoils is due to arbitrary partisan removal. This wrong is not disposed of by saying flippantly that the persons removed have had their share and ought to give way for others. This is merely pleading the absurdity known as rotation in office, which as a principle or a practice in the minor service means nothing whatever. It is a phrase implying an equal sharing of public places among the people. But there is no such thing as sharing the public places because there are not enough for all. If everybody is to be paid out of the public treasury for doing his political duty it is obviously absurd to permit anybody to be paid for four successive years. That would be a wicked monopoly. Even with a term of four months we should not all get a chance at the treasury, and the four years cormorants would evidently take the bread out of the mouths of the rest of us. If Tim is

entitled to a place because he has worked for the party so is Tom. And upon this principle of rotation if there are not places for both of them, all the Tims who are appointed ought to divide their wages with all the Toms for whom there are no places. When Silas Wright called rotation in office a cardinal Republican principle let us hope that he meant rotation in offices for which the constitution provides the opportunity of rotation, and not in the vast multitude of subordinate employments in which equal rotation is absolutely impossible, and in which if it were possible it would be absurd.

The doctrine of rotation in office is justified by its advocates upon two grounds : first, that there should be no vested right in office ; and second, that in public offices there is always a tendency to mere routine, which operates as a kind of dry rot of official vigor and efficiency. But both pleas vanish in a system where the power of removal is unrestricted. No man holds a vested right in public office who holds as in private business at the will of a superior, and the remedy for inefficiency lies, as in all other well-conducted business, on the responsible head of the office. When it is once determined that public business shall be transacted like private business the question of removal will need no such grotesque solution as that of the Edmunds bill. The question of removing a private book-keeper or engineer is not referred to a court of law, and when a merchant's clerk is inefficient or unsatisfactory and is consequently dismissed he does not argue before a United States Court his right to hold his place for three years or for three days longer. In re-enacting the four years' term, thereby sanctioning the abuses known as a clean sweep and partisan rotation in office, and in separating the

executive power of removal from the executive power of appointment, the bill of Mr. Edmunds violates what we believe to be cardinal conditions of thorough reform in the Civil Service.

There is one other plea for rotation in office which is the final defence of the system that makes spoils of the public service. It is asserted that our Government is a government of party, and that thorough party organization and effective party diligence would be impossible without the reward of place. It is contended that the spur of party ambition in great party leaders, in Pitt or Fox, in Clay or Calhoun, in Gladstone or Disraeli, is the desire of reaching great place to direct an imperial policy. If Clay may properly aspire to be President and claim the Presidency as a reward of illustrious party service, why should the same desire and the same claim in a small and humble degree be denied to the follower of Clay who cannot make a speech, but who can bring out the voters? This is a plausible plea, but even when sincere it totally misconceives the facts. In a free country undoubtedly political ambition is the ambition to govern, and when great questions arise and the country divides upon great policies of government those who by resistless argument and burning appeal successfully mould public opinion are naturally placed where they can make that conviction law and enforce it in administration. This is the legitimate result of the successful appeal of political leaders to the country. But neither Clay nor Van Buren nor any other American citizen could claim the Presidency on any ground whatever, and to argue that a man who brings out the voters and "treats the boys" and "runs the machine" should be set to appraising muslins, or weighing spices, or keeping books in a public office upon the same principle that a

party leader is called to organize the measures of the policy which he has proposed and which the country has approved, is to insult the public common sense.

The legitimate and healthy contest of parties in a republic is not to be deprecated. It is the controversy of principles, the argument of policies, the great contention to which the political genius of the English-speaking race especially inclines. But patronage destroys legitimate party action, and the reckless party spirit, against which Washington bequeathed us his last and most solemn warning, constantly strives to substitute personal and private ends for public purposes, and to make party contest a struggle for the public money in the emoluments of petty place instead of a great appeal to the country for a public policy. Thus the spoils system instead of promoting the just objects of party degrades and demoralizes party itself, and destroys its true function. To say that the distribution of non-political places as rewards among a few parasites of politicians whom the parasites hold in higher place, is essential to party, is false because it destroys the legitimate reason of party. But to plead that it is indispensable to general and active interest in politics is to argue against facts and experience as well as against reason.

The first great party change of administration in our own history followed the election of Jefferson. In less than ten years this party had prevailed over the party of Washington and Jay and Hamilton, and was thoroughly organized, enthusiastic, and triumphant. But it had advanced to national supremacy, not only without the control of the patronage, but without the hope of it. Not only had it no such excuse for assessing or such means of disciplining its members, but there was no promise or

general expectation of obtaining place by a clean sweep of Federal office-holders. "Some removals," said Jefferson, "I know must be made. They must be as few as possible, done gradually, and bottomed on some malversation or inherent disqualification. Good men to whom there is no objection but a difference of political opinion, practised on only so far as the right of a private citizen will justify, are not proper subjects of removal." These were Jeffersonian principles. They are absolutely and directly opposed to the Jacksonian principle, to the victors belong the spoils of the enemy. These are the principles of Washington as well as Jefferson; the principles of true Democracy not in the party sense but in that sense in which every true American is a Democrat. Reform in the first party change of administration did not mean turning out honest and efficient postmasters, and night watchmen and messengers as rascals. It meant strict construction of the Constitution, restriction of national powers, the fostering of State sovereignty, reduction of taxes, and economy and simplicity in government. It did not mean a clean sweep of minor places, for there were fewer places upon the national register when Jefferson was inaugurated than there are now upon that of the New York Custom House alone. That single fact proves the absurd untruth of the assertion that the prospect of spoils is the spring of party activity.

The election which just aroused and shaken the British Empire from sea to sea, and which the *London Times* said was to determine the most momentous issue ever decided by a general election in England, is a signal illustration of the legitimate contest of party. It was a tremendous controversy upon a great national question. Every intelligent Englishman,

and Scotchman, and Irishman was as earnestly interested in that election as every patriotic American was absorbed in the great contentions that preceded and accompanied our war for the Union. The whole world watched the conflict and anticipated with eagerness the result. Does any American suppose that it was a struggle for the post offices, and that it would have been a very languid election except for the prospect of small clerkships, messengerships, and a clean sweep? Mr. Gladstone answered him long ago, "We limit to a few scores of persons the removals and appointments on these occasions," and again, "We have abandoned that power (of filling the minor places), we have thrown every one of them open to competition;" and he adds: "And in order that the public service might be, indeed, the public service; in order that we might not have among the civil officers of the State that which we complained of in the army, namely, that the service was not the property of the nation but of the officers, we have now been enabled to remove the barriers of nomination, patronage, jobbing, favoritism in whatever form; and every man belonging to the people of England, if he so please to fit his children for the position of competing for places in the public service, may do it entirely irrespective of the question what is his condition in life, or the amount of means with which he may happen to be or not to be blessed."

These words describe the great purpose of this League, a purpose which with every day is more widely approved by the country, and is therefore constantly nearer accomplishment. There is nothing so essentially Republican, nothing so distinctively Democratic as Civil-Service Reform. The measures which

the practical progress of reform now requires are the rapid and steady extension of the classified service into every branch of the administration to which its principles properly apply ; the repeal of the four years' law and the summary removal of officers who evade or defy the letter or the spirit of the reform law, or interfere in nominations and elections. The unmistakable evidence of determined purpose in the superior officer is felt by every cabin boy on the ship, every private in the ranks, and it is the most effective moral tonic, whether in an actual battle or in the peaceful controversies of reform. Every man, whether in public place or in private life, who believes that a thorough correction of the dangerous abuses of patronage is indispensable, and who holds that a system of the public service which was wise and practicable under President Washington is practicable and wise under President Cleveland or any other President, but who comprehends also the necessary bitterness and tenacity of the contest in which we are engaged, may well ponder the remark of the Yankee to his antagonist, " Wal, I 'spose you're pretty ugly, but I cal'late I'm a darned site uglier. If there is any cabin boy on our ship, or any private in our ranks, who is not full of that spirit and who does not already hear the bugles of victory in his heart, I do not know where to look for him.

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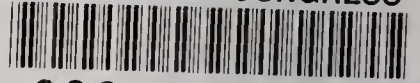
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